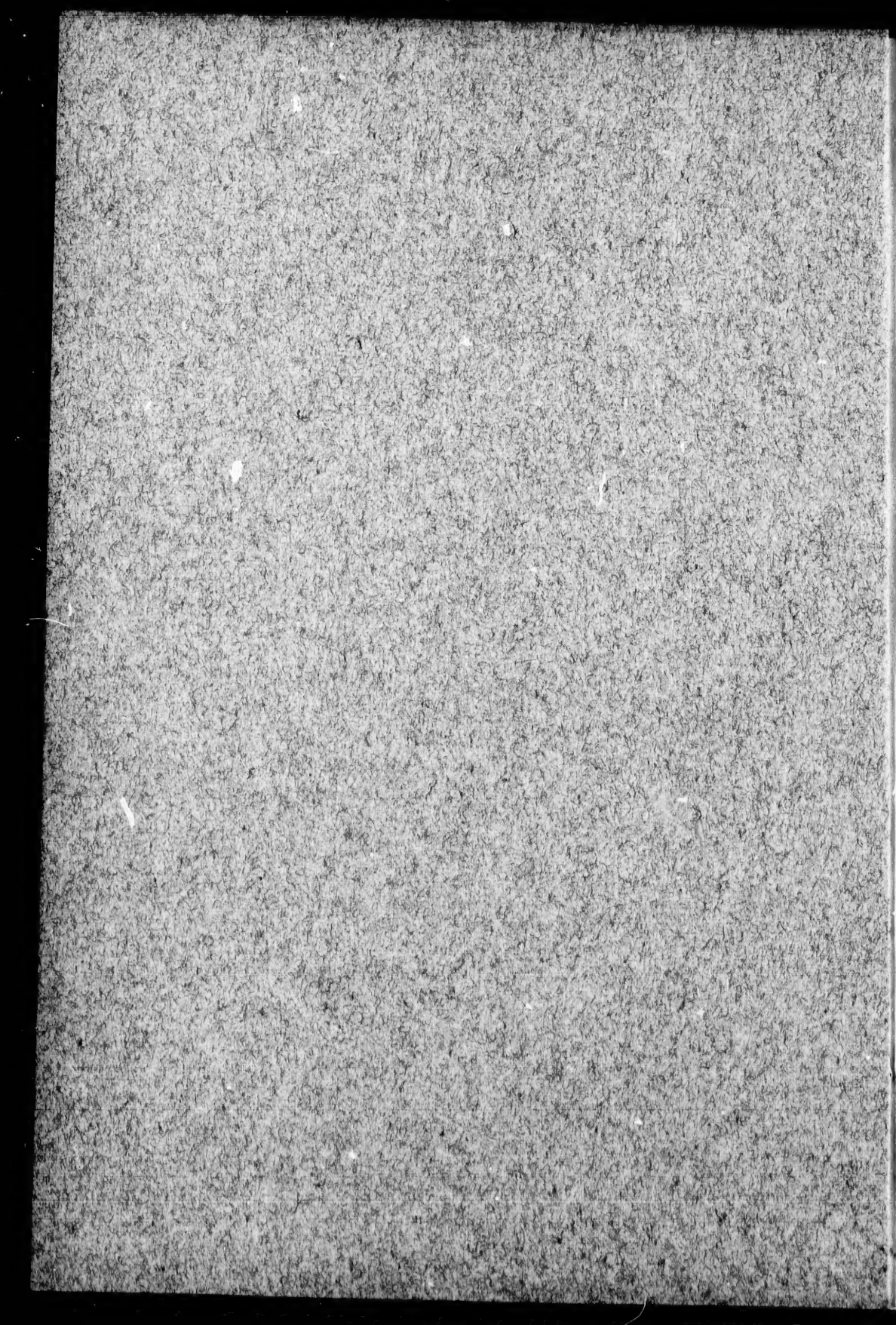


Harper's
Nov. 91.

DAN DUNN'S OUTFIT.

BY JULIAN RALPH.

AT Revelstoke, three hundred and eighty miles from the Pacific Ocean, in British Columbia, a small white steamboat, built on the spot, and exposing a single great paddle-wheel at her stern, was waiting to make another of her still few trips through a wilderness that, but for her presence, would be as completely primitive as almost any in North America. Her route lay down the Columbia River a distance of about one hundred and thirty miles, to a point called Sproat's Landing, where some rapids interrupt navigation. The main load upon the steamer's deck was of steel rails for a railroad that was building into a new mining region in what is called the Kootenay District, just north of our Washington and Idaho. The sister range to the Rockies, called the Selkirks, was to be crossed by the new highway, which would then connect the valley of the Columbia with the Kootenay River. There was a temptation beyond the mere chance to join the first throng that pushed open a gateway and began the breaking of a trail in a brand-new country. There was to be witnessed the propulsion of civilization beyond old confines by steam-power, and this required railroad building in the Rockies, where that science finds its most formidable problems. And around and through all that was being done pressed a new population, made up of many of the elements that produced our old-time border life, and gave birth to some of the most picturesque and exciting chapters in American history.

It should be understood that British Columbia has been but partially explored, and that here in its very heart only the watercourses have been travelled, and there was neither a settlement nor a house along the Columbia in that great reach of

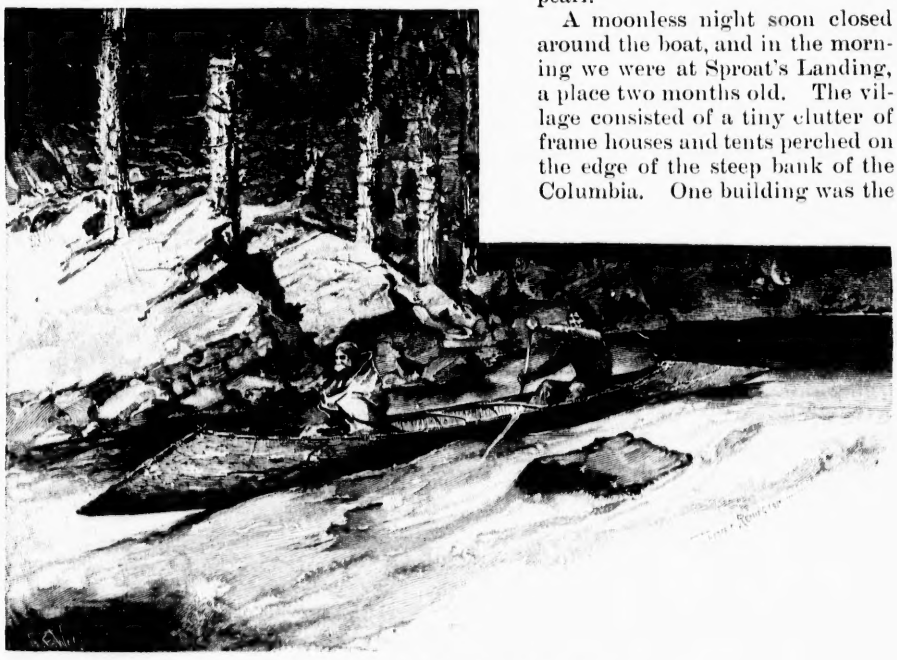
its valley between our border and the Canadian Pacific Railway except at the landing at which this boat stopped.

Over all the varying scene, as the boat ploughed along, hung a mighty silence; for almost the only life on the deep wooded sides of the mountains was that of stealthy game. At only two points were any human beings lodged, and these were wood-choppers who supplied the fuel for the steamer—a Chinaman in one place, and two or three white men farther on. In this part of its magnificent valley the Columbia broadens in two long loops, called the Arrow Lakes, each more than two miles wide and twenty to thirty miles in length. Their prodigious towering walls are densely wooded, and in places are snow-capped in midsummer. The forest growth is primeval, and its own luxuriance crowds it beyond the edge of the grand stream in the fretwork of fallen trunks and bushes, whose roots are bedded in the soft mass of centuries of forest débris.

Early in the journey the clerk of the steamer told me that wild animals were frequently seen crossing the river ahead of the vessel; bear, he said, and deer and elk and porcupine. When I left him to go to my state-room and dress for the rough journey ahead of me, he came to my door, calling in excited tones for me to come out on the deck. "There's a big bear ahead!" he cried, and as he spoke I saw the black head of the animal cleaving the quiet water close to the nearer shore. Presently Bruin's feet touched the bottom, and he bounded into the bush and disappeared.

The scenery was superb all the day, but at sundown nature began to revel in a series of the most splendid and spectacular effects. For an hour a haze had clothed the more distant mountains as with a transparent veil, rendering the view dream-like and soft beyond description. But as the sun sank to the summit of the uplifted horizon, it began to lavish the most intense colors upon all the objects in view. The snowy peaks turned to gaudy prisms as of crystal, the wooded summits became empurpled, the nearer hills turned a deep green, and the tranquil lake assumed a bright pea-color. Above all else, the sky was gorgeous. Around its western edge it took on a rose-red blush that blended at the zenith with a deep blue, in which were floating little clouds of amber and of flame-lit pearl.

A moonless night soon closed around the boat, and in the morning we were at Sproat's Landing, a place two months old. The village consisted of a tiny clutter of frame houses and tents perched on the edge of the steep bank of the Columbia. One building was the



AN INDIAN CANOE ON THE COLUMBIA.

"YOU'RE SETTING YOUR NERVES TO STAND IT."

office and storehouse of the projected railroad, two others were general trading stores, one was the hotel, and the other habitations were mainly tents.

I firmly believe there never was a hotel like the hostelry there. In a general way its design was an adaptation of the plan of a hen-coop. Possibly a box made of gridirons suggests more clearly the principle of its construction. It was two stories high, and contained about a baker's dozen of rooms, the main one being the bar-room, of course. After the framework had been finished, there was perhaps half enough "slab" lumber to sheathe the outside of the house, and this had been made to serve for exterior and interior walls, and the floors and ceilings besides. The consequence was that a flock of gigantic canaries might have been kept in it with propriety, but as a place of abode for human beings it compared closely with the Brooklyn Bridge.

There was a barber pole in front of the house, set up by a "prospector" who had run out of funds (and everything else except hope), and who, like all his kind, had stopped to "make a few dollars" wherewith to outfit again and continue his search for gold. He noted the local need of a barber, and instantly became one by purchasing a razor on credit, and painting a pole while waiting for custom. He was a jocular fellow—a born New-Yorker, by-the-way.

"Don't shave me close," said I.

"Close?" he repeated. "You'll be the luckiest victim I've slashed yet if I get off any of your beard at all. How's the razor?"

"All right."

"Oh no, it ain't," said he; "you're setting your nerves to stand it, so's not to be called a tenderfoot. I'm no barber. I expected to 'tend bar when I bumped up agin this place. If you could see the blood streaming down your face you'd faint."

In spite of his self-depreciation, he performed as artistic and painless an operation as I ever sat through.

In Sproat's Landing we saw the nucleus of a railroad terminal point. The queer hotel was but little more peculiar than many of the people who gathered on the single street on pay-day to spend their hard-earned money upon a great deal of illicit whiskey and a few rude necessaries from the limited stock on sale in the stores. There never had been any grave disorder there, yet the floating population was as motley a collection of the riffraff of the border as one could well imagine, and

there was only one policeman to enforce the law in a territory the size of Rhode Island. He was quite as remarkable in his way as any other development of that embryotic civilization. His name was Jack Kirkup, and all who knew him spoke of him as being physically the most superb example of manhood in the Dominion. Six feet and three inches in height, with the chest, neck, and limbs of a giant, his three hundred pounds of weight were so exactly his complement as to give him the symmetry of an Apollo. He was good-looking, with the beauty of a round-faced, good-natured boy, and his thick hair fell in a cluster of ringlets over his forehead and upon his neck. No knight of Arthur's circle can have been more picturesque a figure in the forest than this "Jack." He was as neat as a dandy. He wore high boots and corduroy knickerbockers, a flannel shirt and a sack-coat, and rode his big bay horse with the ease and grace of a Skobeleff. He smoked like a fire of green brush, but had never tasted liquor in his life. In a dozen years he had slept more frequently in the open air, upon pebble beds or in trenches in the snow, than upon ordinary bedding, and he exhibited, in his graceful movements, his sparkling eyes and ruddy cheeks, his massive frame and his imperturbable good nature, a degree of health and vigor that would seem insolent to the average New-Yorker. Now that the railroad was building, he kept ever on the trail, along what was called "the right of way"—going from camp to camp to "jump" whiskey peddlers and gamblers and to quell disorder—except on pay-day, once a month, when he staid at Sproat's Landing.

The echoes of his fearless behavior and lively adventures rang in every gathering. The general tenor of the stories was to the effect that he usually gave one warning to evil-doers, and if they did not heed that he "cleaned them out." He carried a revolver, but never had used it. Even when the most notorious gambler on our border had crossed over into "Jack's" bailiwick the policeman depended upon his fists. He had met the gambler and had "advised" him to take the cars next day. The gambler, in reply, had suggested that both would get along more quietly if each minded his own affairs, whereupon Kirkup had said, "You hear me: take the cars out of here to-morrow." The little community (it was Donald, B. C., a very rough place at the time) held its breathing for twenty-four hours, and at the approach of train-time was on tiptoe with strained anxiety. At twenty minutes before the hour the policeman, amiable and

JACK KIRKUP, THE MOUNTAIN SHERIFF.

easy-going as ever in appearance, began a tour of the houses. It was in a tavern that he found the gambler.

"You must take the train," said he.

"You can't make me," replied the gambler.

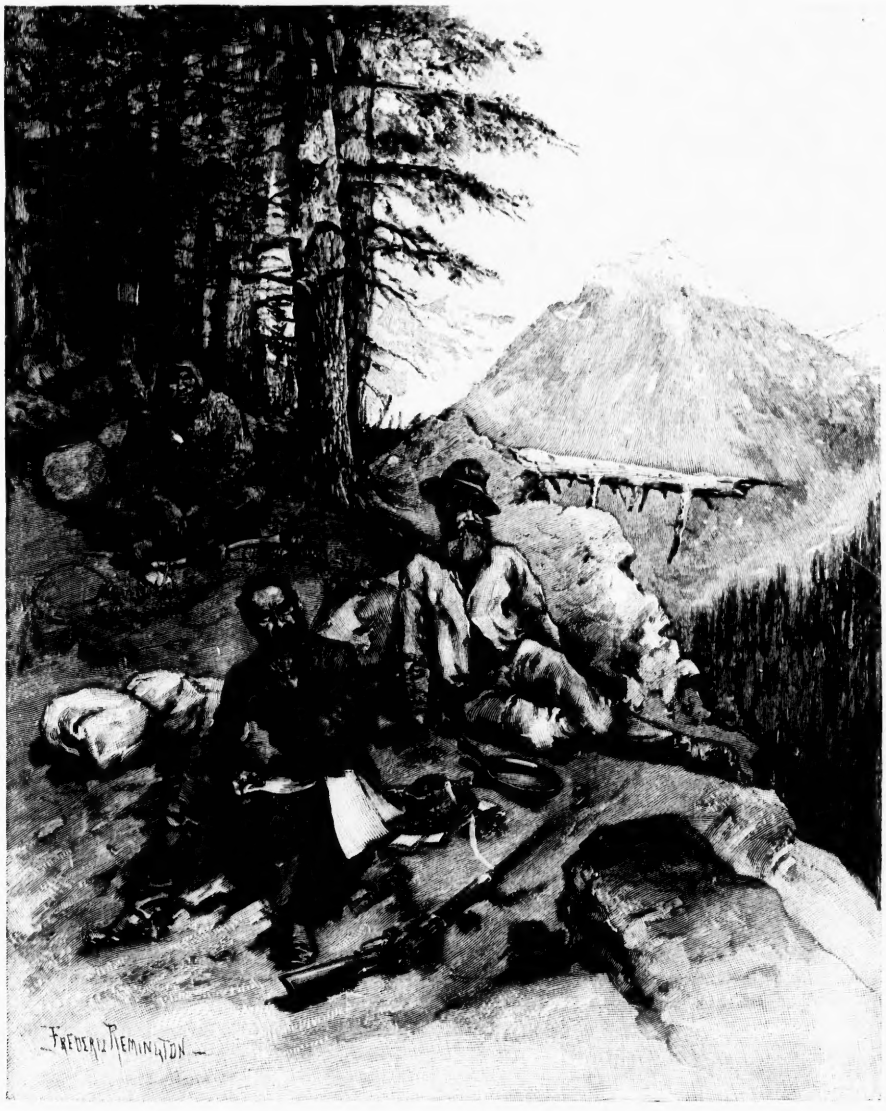
There were no more words. In two minutes the giant was carrying the limp body of the ruffian to a wagon, in which he drove him to the jail. There he washed the blood off the gambler's face and tidied his collar and scarf. From there the couple walked to the cars, where they parted amicably.

"I had to be a little rough," said Kirkup to the loungers at the station, "because he was armed like a pin-cushion, and I didn't want to have to kill him."

We made the journey from Sproat's Landing to the Kootenay River upon a sorry quartet of pack-horses that were at other times employed to carry provisions and material to the construction camps. They were of the kind of horses known all over the West as "coyooses," because of a humorous fancy begotten of their wildness, and suggesting that they are only part horses and part coyotes. But all the wildness and the characteristic "bucking" had long since been "packed" out of these poor creatures, and they needed the whip frequently to urge them upon a slow progress. Kirkup was going his rounds, and accompanied us on our journey of less than twenty miles to the Kootenay River. On the way one saw every stage in the construction of a railway. The process of development was reversed as we travelled, because the work had been pushed well along where we started, and was but at its commencement where we ended our trip. At the Landing, half a mile or more of the railroad had been completed, even to the addition of a locomotive and two gondola cars. Beyond the little strip of rails was a long reach of graded road-bed, and so the progress of the work dwindled, until at last there was little more than the trail-cutters' path to mark what had been determined as the "right of way."

For the sake of clearness, I will first explain the steps that are taken at the outset in building a railroad, rather than tell what parts of the undertaking we came upon in passing over the various "contracts" that were being worked in what appeared a confusing and hap-hazard disorder. I have mentioned that one of the houses at the landing was the railroad company's storehouse, and that near by were the tents of the surveyors or civil engineers. The road was to be a branch of the Canadian Pacific system, and these engineers were the first men sent into the country, with instructions to survey a line to the new mining region, into which men were pouring from the older parts of Canada and from our country. It was understood by them that they were to hit upon the most direct and at the same time the least expensive route for the railroad to take. They went to the scene of their labors by canoes, and carried tents, blankets, instruments, and what they called their "grub stakes," which is to say, their food. Then they travelled over the ground between their two terminal points, and back by another route, and back again by still another route, and so back and forth perhaps four and possibly six times. In that way alone were they enabled to select the line which offered the shortest length and the least obstacles in number and degree for the workmen who were to come after them.

At Sproat's Landing I met an engineer, Mr. B. C. Stewart, who is famous in his profession as the most tireless and intrepid exponent of its difficulties in the Dominion. The young men account it a misfortune to be detailed to go on one of his journeys with him. It is his custom to start out with a blanket, some bacon and meal, and a coffee-pot, and to be gone for weeks, and even for months. There scarcely can have been a hardier Scotchman, one of more simple tastes and requirements, or one possessing in any higher degree the quality called endurance. He has spent years in the mountains of British Columbia, finding and exploring the various passes, the most direct and feasible routes to and from them, the valleys between the ranges, and the characteristics of each section of the country. In a vast country that has not otherwise been one-third explored he has made himself familiar with the full southern half. He has not known what it was to enjoy a home, nor has he seen an apple growing upon a tree in many years. During his long and close-succeeding trips he has run the whole gamut of the adventures incident to the lives of hunters or explorers, suffering hunger, exposure, peril from wild beasts, and all the hair-breadth escapes from frost and storm and flood that

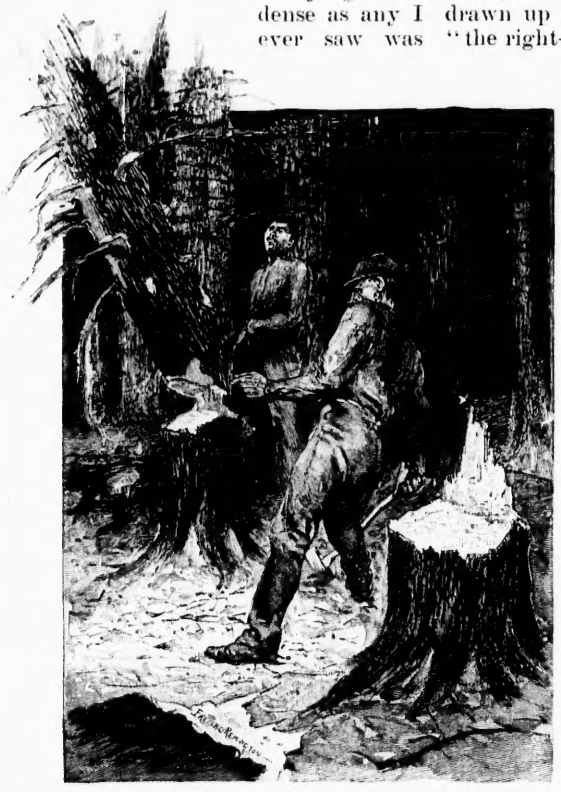


ENGINEER ON THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY.

Nature unvanquished visits upon those who first brave her depths. Such is the work and such are the men that figure in the foremost preliminaries to railroad building.

Whoever has left the beaten path of travel or gone beyond a well-settled region can form a more or less just estimate of that which one of these professional pioneers encounters in prospecting for a railroad. I had several "tastes," as the Irish express it, of that very Kootenay Valley. I can say conscientiously that I never was in a wilder region. In going only a few yards from the railroad "right of way" the difficulties of an experienced pedestrianism like my own instantly became tremendous. There was a particularly choice spot for fishing at a distance of three-quarters of a mile from

Dan Dunn's outfit, and I travelled the road to it half a dozen times. Bunyan would have strengthened the *Pilgrim's Progress* had he known of such conditions with which to surround his hero. Between rocks the size of a city mansion and unsteady bowlders no larger than a man's head the ground was all but covered. Among this wreckage trees grew in wild abundance, and countless trunks of dead ones lay rotting between them. A jungle as dense as any I ever saw was formed of soft-wood saplings and bushes, so that it was next to impossible to move a yard in any direction. It was out of the question for any one to see three yards ahead, and there was often no telling when a foot was put down whether it was going through a rotten trunk or upon a spinning bowlder, or whether the black shadows here and there were a foot deep or were the mouths of fissures that reached to China. I fished too long one night, and was obliged to make that journey after dark. After ten minutes crowded with falls and false steps, the task seemed so hopelessly impossible that I could easily have been induced to turn back and risk a night on the rocks at the edge of the tide.



FALLING MONARCHS.

It was after a thorough knowledge of the natural conditions which the railroad men were overcoming that the gradual steps of their progress became most interesting. The first men to follow the engineers, after the specifications have been drawn up and the contracts signed, are "the right-of-way men." These are partly trail-makers and partly laborers at the heavier work of actually clearing the wilderness for the roadbed. The trail-cutters are guided by the long line of stakes with which the engineers have marked the course the road is to take. The trail-men are sent out to cut what in general parlance would be called a path, over which supplies are to be thereafter carried to the workmen's camps. The path they cut must therefore be sufficiently wide for the passage along it of a mule and his load. As a mule's load will sometimes consist of the framework of a kitchen range, or the end boards of a bedstead, a five-foot swath through the forest is a trail of serviceable width. The trail-cutters fell the trees to right and left, and drag the fallen trunks out of the path as they go along, travelling and working between a mile and two miles each day, and moving their tents and provisions on pack-horses as they advance. They keep reasonably close to the projected line of the railway, but the path they cut is apt to be a winding one that avoids the larger rocks and the smaller ravines. Great distortions, such as hills or gullies, which the railroad must pass through or over, the trail men pay no heed to; neither do the pack-horses, whose tastes are not consulted, and who can cling to a rock at al-

most any angle, like flies of larger growth. This trail, when finished, leads from the company's storehouse all along the line, and from that storehouse, on the backs of the pack-animals, come all the food and tools and clothing, powder, dynamite, tents, and living utensils, to be used by the workmen, their bosses, and the engineers.

Slowly, behind the trail-cutters, follow the "right-of-way" men. These are axemen also. All that they do is to cut the trees down and drag them out of the way.

It is when the axemen have cleared the right of way that the first view of the railroad in embryo is obtainable. And very queer it looks. It is a wide avenue through the forest, to be sure, yet it is little like any forest drive that we are accustomed to in the realms of civilization.

Every succeeding stage of the work leads toward the production of an even and level thoroughfare, without protuberance or depression, and in the course of our ride to Dan Dunn's camp on the Kootenay we saw the rapidly developing railroad in each phase of its evolution from the rough surface of the wilderness. Now we would come upon a long reach of finished road-bed on comparatively level ground all ready for the rails, with carpenters at work in little gullies which they were spanning with timber trestles. Next we would see a battalion of men and dump carts cutting into a hill of dirt and carting its substance to a neighboring valley, wherein they were slowly heaping a long and symmetrical wall of earthwork, with sloping sides and level top, to bridge the gap between hill and hill. Again, we came upon places where men ran toward us shouting that a "blast" was to be fired. Here was what was called "rockwork," where some granite rib of a mountain or huge rocky knoll was being blown to flinders with dynamite.

And so, through all these scenes upon the pack trail, we came at last to a white camp of tents hidden in the lush greenery of a luxuriant forest, and nestling beside a rushing mountain torrent of green water flecked with the foam from an eternal battle with a myriad of sunken rocks. It was Dunn's headquarters—the construction camp. Evening was falling, and the men were clambering down the hillside trails from their work. There was no order in the disposition of the tents,

DAN DUNN ON HIS WORKS.

nor had the forest been prepared for them. Their white sides rose here and there wherever there was a space between the trees, as if so many great white moths had settled in a garden. Huge trees had been felled and thrown across ravines to serve as aerial foot-paths from point to point, and at the river's edge two or three tents seemed to have been pushed over the steep bluff to find lodgement on the sandy beach beside the turbulent stream.

There were other camps on the line of this work, and it is worth while to add a word about their management and the system under which they were maintained. In the first place, each camp is apt to be the outfit of a contractor. The whole work of building a railroad is let out in contracts for portions of five, ten, or fifteen miles. Even when great jobs

of 70 or 100 miles are contracted for in one piece, it is customary for the contractor to divide his task and sublet it. But a fairly representative bit of mountain work is that which I found Dan Dunn superintending, as the factotum of the contractor who undertook it.

If a contractor acts as "boss" himself, he stays upon the ground; but in this case the contractor had other undertakings in hand. Hence the presence of Dan Dunn, his walking boss or general foreman. Dunn is a man of means, and is himself a contractor by profession, who has worked his way up from a start as a laborer.

The camp to which we came was a portable city, complete except for its lack of women. It had its artisans, its professional men, its store and workshops, its seat of government and officers, and its policeman, its amusement hall, its work-a-day and social sides. Its main peculiarity was that its boss (for it was like an American city in the possession of that functionary also) had announced that he was going to move it a couple of miles away on the following Sunday. One tent was the stableman's, with a capacious "corral" fenced in near by for the keeping of the pack-horses and mules. His corps of assistants was a large one; for, besides the pack-horses that connected the camp with the outer world, he had the keeping of all the "grade-horses," so called—those which draw the stone and dirt carts and the little dump cars on the false tracks set up on the levels near where "filling" or "cutting" is to be done. Another tent was the blacksmith's. He had a "helper," and was a busy man, charged with all the tool-sharpening, the care of all the horses' feet, and the repairing of all the ironwork of the wagons, cars, and dirt-scrapers. Near by was the harness-man's tent, the shop of the leather-mender. In the centre of the camp, like a low citadel, rose a mound of logs and earth bearing on a sign the single word "Powder," but containing within its great sunken chamber a considerable store of various explosives—giant, black, and Judson powder and dynamite.

More tremendous force is used in railroad blasting than most persons imagine. In order to perform a quick job of removing a section of solid mountain, the drill-men, after making a bore, say, twenty feet in depth, begin what they call "springing" it by exploding little cartridges in the bottom of the drill hole until they have produced a considerable chamber there. The average amount of explosive for which they thus prepare a place is forty or fifty kegs of giant powder and ten kegs of black powder; but Dunn told me he had seen 280 kegs of black powder and 500 pounds of dynamite used in a single blast in mountain work.

Another tent was that of the time-keeper. He journeyed twice a day all over the work, five miles up and five down. On one journey he noted what men were at labor in the forenoon, and on his return he tallied those who were entitled to pay for the second half of the day. Such an official knows the name of every laborer, and, moreover, he knows the pecuniary rating of each man, so that when the workmen stop him to order shoes or trousers, blankets, shirts, tobacco, penknives, or what not, he decides upon his own responsibility whether they have sufficient money coming to them to meet the accommodation.

The "store" was simply another tent. In it was kept a fair supply of the articles in constant demand—a supply brought from the headquarters store at the other end of the trail, and constantly replenished by the pack-horses. This trading-place was in charge of a man called "the book-keeper," and he had two or three clerks to assist him. The stock was precisely like that of a cross-roads country store in one of our older States. Its goods included simple medicines, boots, shoes, clothing, cutlery, tobacco, cigars, pipes, hats and caps, blankets, thread and needles, and several hundred others among the ten thousand necessaries of a modern laborer's life. The only legal tender received there took the shape of orders written by the time-keeper, for the man in charge of the store was not required to know the ratings of the men upon the pay-roll.

The doctor's tent was among the rest, but his office might aptly have been said to be "in the saddle." He was nominally employed by the company, but each man was "docked," or charged, seventy-five cents a month for medical services whether he ever needed a doctor or not. When I was in the camp there was only one sick man—a rheumatic. He had a tent all to himself, and his meals were regularly carried to him. Though he was a stranger to every man there, and had worked only one day before he sur-

THE SUPPLY TRAIN OVER THE MOUNTAIN.

A SKETCH ON THE WORK.

rendered to sickness, a purse of about forty dollars had been raised for him among the men, and he was to be "packed" to Sproat's Landing on a mule at the company's expense whenever the doctor decreed it wise to move him. Of course invalidism of a more serious nature is not infrequent where men work in the paths of sliding rocks, beneath caving earth, amid falling forest trees, around giant blasts, and with heavy tools.

Another one of the tents was that of the "boss packer." He superintended the transportation of supplies on the pack-trail. This "job of 200 men," as Dunn styled his camp, employed thirty pack horses and mules. The pack trains consisted of a "bell-horse" and boy, and six horses following. Each animal was rated to carry a burden of 400 pounds of dead weight, and to require three quarts of meal three times a day.

Another official habitation was the "store-man's" tent. As a rule, there is a store-man to every ten miles of construction work; often every camp has one. The store-man keeps account of the distribution of the supplies of food. He issues requisitions upon the head storehouse of the company, and makes out orders for each day's rations from the camp store. The cooks are therefore under him, and this fact suggests a mention of the principal building in the camp—the mess hall, or "grub tent."

This structure was of a size to accommodate two hundred men at once. Two tables ran the length of the unbroken interior—tables made roughly of the slabs or outside boards from a saw-mill. The benches were huge tree trunks spiked fast upon stumps. There was a bench on either side of each table, and the places for the men were each set with a tin cup and a tin pie plate. The bread was heaped high on wooden platters, and all the condiments—catsup, vinegar, mustard, pepper, and salt—were in cans that had once held condensed milk. The cooks worked in an open-ended extension at the rear of the great room. The rule is to have one cook and two "cookees" to each sixty men.

While I was a new arrival just undergoing introduction, the men, who had come in from work, and who had "washed up" in the little creeks and at the river bank, began to assemble in the "grub tent" for supper. They were especially interesting to me because there was every reason to believe that they formed an assembly as typical of the human flotsam of the border as ever was gathered on the continent. Very few were what might be called born laborers; on the contrary, they were mainly men of higher origin who had failed in older civilizations; outlaws from the States; men who had hoped for a gold mine until hope was all but dead; men in the first flush of the

gold fever; ne'er-do-wells; and here and there a working-man by training. They ate as a good many other sorts of men do, with great rapidity, little etiquette, and just enough unselfishness to pass each other the bread. It was noticeable that they seemed to have no time for talking. Certainly they had earned the right to be hungry, and the food was good and plentiful.

Dan Dunn's tent was just in front of the mess tent, a few feet away on the edge of the river bluff. It was a little "A" tent, with a single cot on one side, a wooden chest on the other, and a small table between the two at the farther end, opposite the door.

"Are ye looking at my wolverenes?" said he. "There's good men among them, and some that ain't so good, and many that's worse. But railroading is good enough for most of 'em. It ain't too rich for any man's blood, I assure ye."

Over six feet in height, broad-chested, athletic, and carrying not an ounce of flesh that could be spared, Dan Dunn's was a striking figure even where physical strength was the most serviceable possession of every man. From never having given his personal appearance a thought—except during a brief period of courtship antecedent to the establishment of a home in old Ontario—he had so accustomed himself to unrestraint that his habitual attitude was that of a long-bladed jack-knife not fully opened. His long spare arms swung limberly before a long spare body set upon long spare legs. His costume was one that is never described in the advertisements of city clothiers. It consisted of a dust-coated slouch felt hat, which a dealer once sold for black, of a flannel shirt, of homespun trousers, of socks, and of heavy "brogans." In all, his dress was what the æsthetes of Mr. Wilde's day might have aptly termed a symphony in dust. His shoes and hat had acquired a mud-color, and his shirt and trousers were chosen because they originally possessed it. Yet Dan Dunn was distinctly a cleanly man, fond of frequent splashing in the camp toilet basins—the Kootenay River and its little rushing tributaries. He was not shaven. As a rule he is not, and yet at times he is, as it happens. I learned that on Sundays, when there was nothing to do except to go fishing, or to walk over to the engineer's camp for intellectual society, he felt the unconscious impulse of a forgotten training, and put on a coat. He even tied a black silk ribbon under his collar on such occasions, and if no one had given him a good cigar during the week, he took out his best pipe (which had been locked up, because whatever was not under lock and key was certain to be stolen in half

THE MESS TENT AT NIGHT.

"THEY GAINED ERECTNESS BY SLOW JOLTS."

an hour). Then he felt fitted, as he would say, "for a hard day's work at loafing."

If you came upon Dan Dunn on Broadway, he would look as awkward as any other animal removed from its element; yet on a forest trail not even Davy Crockett was handsomer or more picturesque. His face is reddish-brown and as hard-skinned as the top of a drum, befitting a man who has lived out-of-doors all his life. But it is a finely moulded face, instinct with good nature and some gentleness. The witchery of quick Irish humor lurks often in his eyes, but can quickly give place on occasion to a firm light, which is best read in connection with the broad, strong sweep of his massive underjaw. There you see his fitness to command small armies, even of what he calls "wolverenes." He is willing to thrash any man who seems to need the operation, and yet he is equally noted for gathering a squad of rough laborers in every camp to make them his wards. He collects the money such men earn, and puts it in bank or sends it to their families.

"It does them as much good to let me take it as to chuck it over a gin-mill bar," he explained.

As we stood looking into the crowded booth, where the men sat elbow to elbow, and all the knife blades were plying to and from all the plates and mouths, Dunn explained that his men were well fed.

"The time has gone by," said he, "when you could keep an outfit on salt pork and bacon. It's as far gone as them days when they say the Hudson Bay Company fed its laborers on rabbit tracks and a stick. Did ye never hear of that? Why, sure, man, 'twas only fifty years ago that when meal hours came the bosses of the big trading company would give a workman a stick, and point out some rabbit tracks, and tell him he'd have an hour to catch his fill. But in railroading nowadays we give them the best that's going, and all they want of it—beef, ham, bacon, potatoes, mush, beans, oatmeal, the choicest fish, and game right out of the woods, and every sort of vegetable (canned, of course). Oh, they must be fed well, or they wouldn't stay."

He said that the supplies of food are calculated on the basis of three and a half pounds of provisions to a man—all the varieties of food being proportioned so

that the total weight will be three and a half pounds a day. The orders are given frequently and for small amounts, so as to economize in the number of horses required on the pack trail. The amount to be consumed by the horses is, of course, included in the loads. The cost of "packing" food over long distances is more considerable than would be supposed. It was estimated that at Dunn's camp the freighting cost forty dollars a ton, but I heard of places farther in the mountains where the cost was double that. Indeed, a discussion of the subject brought to light the fact that in remote mining camps the cost of "packing" brought lager-beer in bottles up to the price of champagne. At one camp on the Kootenay bacon was selling at the time I was in the valley at thirty cents a pound, and dried peaches fetched forty cents under competition.

As we looked on, the men were eating fresh beef and vegetables, with tea and coffee and pie. The head cook was a man trained in a lumber camp, and therefore ranked high in the scale of his profession. Every sort of cook drifts into camps like these, and that camp considers itself the most fortunate which happens to eat under the ministrations of a man who has cooked on a steamboat; but a cook from a lumber camp is rated almost as proudly.

"Ye would not think it," said Dunn, "but some of them men has been bank clerks, and there's doctors and teachers among 'em—everything, in fact, except preachers. I never knew a preacher to get into a railroad gang. The men are always changing—coming and going. We don't have to advertise for new hands. The woods is full of men out of a job, and out of everything—pockets, elbows, and all. They drift in like peddlers on a pay-day. They come here with no more clothing than will wad a gun. The most of them will get nothing after two months' work. You see, they're mortgaged with their fares against them (thirty to forty dollars for them which the railroad brings from the East), and then they have their meals to pay for, at five dollars a week they're here, and on top of that is all the clothing and shoes and blankets and tobacco and everything they need—all charged agin them. It's just as well for them, for the most of them are too rich if they're a dollar ahead. There's few of them can stand the luxury of thirty dollars. When they get a stake of them dimensions, the most of them will stay no longer after pay-day than John Brown staid in heaven. The most of them bang it all away for drink, and they are sure to come back again, but the 'prospectors' and chronic tramps only work to get clothes and a flirting acquaintance with food, as well as money enough to make an affidavit to, and they never come back again at all. Out of 8500 men we had in one big work in Canada, 1500 to 2000 knocked off every month. Ninety per cent. came back. They had just been away for an old-fashioned drunk."

It would be difficult to draw a parallel between these laborers and any class or condition of men in the East. They were of every nationality where news of gold mines, of free settlers' sections, or of quick fortunes in the New World had penetrated. I recognized Greeks, Finns, Hungarians, Danes, Scotch, English, Irish, and Italians among them. Not a man exhibited a coat, and all were tanned brown, and were as spare and slender as excessively hard work can make a man. There was not a superfluity or an ornament in sight as they walked past me; not a necktie, a finger-ring, nor a watch chain. There were some very intelligent faces and one or two fine ones in the band. Two typical old-fashioned prospectors especially attracted me. They were evidently of gentle birth, but time and exposure had bent, them and silvered their long, unkempt locks. Worse than all, it had planted in their faces a blended expression of sadness and hope fatigued that was painful to see. It is the brand that is on every old prospector's face. A very few of the men were young fellows of thirty, or even within the twenties. Their youth impelled them to break away from the table earlier than the others, and, seizing their rods, to start off for the fishing in the river.

But those who thought of active pleasure were few indeed. Theirs was killing work, the most severe kind, and performed under the broiling sun, that at high mountain altitudes sends the mercury above 100° on every summer's day, and makes itself felt as if the rarefied atmosphere was no atmosphere at all. After a long day at the drill or the pick or shovel in such a climate, it was only natural that the men should, with a common impulse, seek first the solace of their pipes, and then of the shake-downs in their tents.

I did not know until the next morning how severely their systems were strained; but it happened at sunrise on that day that I was at my ablutions on the edge of the river when Dan Dunn's gong turned the silent forest into a bedlam. It was called the seven-o'clock alarum, and was rung two hours earlier than that hour, so that the men might take two hours after dinner out of the heat of the day, "else the sun would kill them," Dunn said. This was apparently his device, and he kept up the transparent deception by having every clock and watch in the camp set two hours out of time.

With the sounding of the gong the men began to appear outside the little tents in which they slept in couples. They came stumbling down the bluff to wash in the river, and of all the pitiful sights I ever saw, they presented one of the worst; of all the straining and racking and exhaustion that ever hard labor gave to men, they exhibited the utmost. They were but half awakened, and they moved so painfully and stiffly that I imagined I could hear their bones creak. I have seen spavined work-horses turned out to die that moved precisely as these men did. It was shocking to see them hobble over the rough ground; it was pitiful to watch them as they attempted to straighten their stiffened bodies after they had been bent double over the water. They gained erectness by slow jolts, as if their joints were of iron that had rusted. Of course they soon regained whatever elasticity nature had left them, and were themselves for the day—an active, muscular force of men. But that early morning sight of them was not such a spectacle as a right-minded man enjoys seeing his fellows take part in.

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